

**Medina County Judge
Jim Barden**

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#E1-57
RQ

April 24, 2003

Ms. Jaya Zyman-Ponebshek
URS Corporation
P.O. Box 201088
Austin, Texas 78720-1088

FD 34284

Re: TB Finance Docket No. 34284, Southwest Gulf Railroad
Company-Construction and Operation-Exemption-Medina
County, TX

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above matter. As you can imagine it is a subject of some concern and controversy among the citizens who live in or near the affected area.

Before outlining the county's concerns regarding the project, I want to correct a few misimpressions in the Synopsis attached to the STB letter of March 31, 2003. First, Medina County has a population of 40,000 persons rather than 33,000 as stated in the Synopsis. This number is increasing dramatically as developers are opening subdivisions in the eastern half of the county to accommodate San Antonio's growth. By the time any such rail line be put in operation, I expect the population will have grown by another 10% or more with most of it in the eastern part of the county where the quarry and railroad are proposed.

Second, while the roads to be crossed are lightly traveled when compared to urban interstates, they do carry a significant amount of traffic and are major east/west routes for our county citizens.

Third, the synopsis states that the proposed line traverses only two drainage features with intermittent seasonal flow (Quihi and Elm Creek). Substitute the word "flood" for "flow" and a more accurate picture emerges. Placing a rail line across these areas without significant length of open bridges or trestles will exacerbate our almost annual flooding problems.

Having said the above, the county governments concerns regarding the proposed rail line center on two areas. If the rail line is built we want to see the safest possible road crossings and the least intrusive creek, draw and slough crossings. Several years ago when this project was first announced the proposed quarry owners represented to the Precinct

Commissioner that there would be elevated road or RR crossings on FM 2676 and CR 4516. Now we understand they are only proposing grade crossings. With at least 4 trains per day at 100 cars for at least 250 days each year this presents a major safety concern and traffic flow impediment. I urge serious consideration of having elevated roadway crossings at these two major arteries in Medina County.

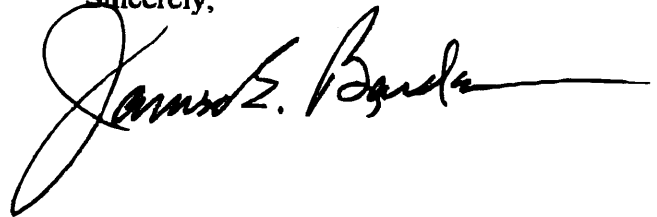
The other concern (water flow and flooding) is equally great. The history of this area is not one of gently flowing streams that rise with a big rain. Rather it is a history of flash flooding that can inundate large areas of land in a matter of minutes and hours. Any structure placed across these flood areas is a problem. I hope that sufficient construction requirements will be imposed to alleviate this problem as much as possible.

Regarding which of the four proposed routes is preferable, there appears to be little difference as far as our concerns of traffic safety and movement and flooding are concerned... or at least none of that can be discerned without expensive further study.

The individual citizens in the area have substantial and additional concerns which should be heard. The issues outlined above (traffic safety and flooding) are the principal concerns of the county government.

Again, thank you for the chance to have our views heard. I will be glad to visit further with you if you wish.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James E. Bonds", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

JEB/jaa